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WASHINGTON POST
30 August 1983

AROUND THE WORLD

Armenian Group Reports Slayings

ATHENS—The Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia said that agents sponsored by the U.S. and Turkish intelligence services killed two members of its central committee last month.

The group's statement, typed in English and delivered to a news agency office, added that the group had in turn killed two of those responsible and was holding and questioning Turkish agents involved in the killings.

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WASHINGTON POST

26 July 1983

Terrorist Groups Baffle Experts in Armenian Tactics

By Ian Black

Washington Post Staff Writer

The suitcase bomb that killed seven people waiting to board a Turkish airlines jet at Orly Airport in Paris on July 15 has set western intelligence and counterterrorist experts to searching their files for information about the Armenian group that claimed responsibility for the lethal blast.

The attack, one of the bloodiest in the Armenians' unrelenting struggle against Turkey, does not necessarily herald an escalation of the violence, the experts say, but they express concern about the lack of basic information on the resources and capabilities of the two main groups concerned.

They are also worried about what appears to be a qualitative change in the character of Armenian terrorist activities: an increasing readiness to attack targets indiscriminately.

Although relative novices in the murky world of international terrorism, the Armenians have an impressive track record of political violence.

In the last decade they have killed more than 30 people around the world, mostly Turkish diplomats, according to the Turkish government. The day before last week's Orly bombing, another Turkish official was shot to death at point-blank range outside his home in Brussels.

The geographical scope of the attacks is also striking.

Eastern and western Europe, Canada and Australia have all suffered Armenian violence. In 1982, according to FBI figures, there were five officially defined Armenian "terrorist" incidents in the United States: two attempted bombings, one bombing and two assassinations.

The Armenians say that they are seeking vengeance for the massacre of 1.5 million of their people by the Ottoman Turks between 1896 and 1915, but successive Turkish governments have refused to acknowledge responsibility for the killings or the numbers cited by the Armenians.

The best known and largest of the two known groups is the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA). Its ideology is Marxist and thus theoretically internationalist, but it appears to have no real interest beyond attacking the Turks.

"Their grasp of political theory is about fourth-grade level, but they're certainly very dedicated," said one U.S. official. "One could say that these groups are the deadliest around, and if they're not the deadliest they're certainly amongst them."

Howard Bane, until 1980 the CIA's director of counterterrorism, described ASALA as "probably the most impressive in terms of effectiveness" of all international terrorist groups.

"They're brutal," he said. "They don't take hostages to negotiate. It's just out-and-out murder."

Founded in Beirut in 1975, ASALA lined up with the Palestinians and the Muslim Lebanese in their bitter civil war with the country's Christians. They forged close ties with radical Palestinian groups like George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Last summer, when Israel invaded Lebanon and drove the Palestinians and their allies out of Beirut, ASALA lost its base.

Since then, experts say, the group may have relocated in Damascus. One indication of this is that several recently captured members of the group are Syrians of Armenian origin. Varadjian Garbidjian, who claimed responsibility for the Orly bombing, is Syrian-born, as is an ASALA member on trial in London on a charge of conspiring to murder the Turkish ambassador to Britain. But some recent communiques have come from Athens.

ASALA does not hesitate to kill non-Turkish bystanders who are near its Turkish targets, and favors bombings over shootings, according to the experts. Its technique is often amateurish and its members easily caught, they say.

But the counterterrorist experts speak with respect of the second known group, the Justice Commandos for the Armenian Genocide (JCAG).

"The JCAG are just incredibly good at it in terms of sheer deadliness," one said.

This smaller group, according to another expert, enjoys far wider support among Armenian communities abroad than does ASALA, as evidenced by generous collections raised for the defense of accused JCAG members. ASALA's leftist ideology and indiscriminate violence, as well as occasional attempts at extorting money, on the other hand, are repugnant to old established communal organizations.

JCAG's politics are rightist and nationalist, and in Lebanon it allied itself with the Christian Phalangists. It is concerned more with settling old scores than carving a utopian future Armenia out of eastern Turkey and the Soviet Republic of Armenia.

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LOS ANGELES TIMES
11 August 1983

3 Armenians in Airport Bomb Plot Convicted

By DAN MORAIN, *Times Staff Writer*

Three Armenians were convicted Wednesday of trying to bomb an Air Canada freight terminal at Los Angeles International Airport in order to obtain the freedom of four suspected terrorists under arrest in Canada.

"This represents the community's rejection of terrorism and the hooligans who engage in it," Assistant U.S. Atty. Frederik Jacobsen said of the guilty verdicts against Hrach Kozibioukian, 31; his wife, Siranouche, 22, and Varant Chirinian, 29, all of the Los Angeles area.

The federal court jury returned its finding after two days of deliberation and a six-week trial that included testimony from a number of FBI agents involved in the fight against terrorism, as well as an appearance for the defense by an ex-Central Intelligence Agency officer who hinted at a CIA role in the case.

Defense attorneys argued that the three defendants were forced into placing the bomb at the terminal on May 30, 1982, by a mystery man who, they speculated, was probably a CIA agent assigned to infiltrate the terrorist Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia.

Gathered Information

"It's a miscarriage of justice and we intend to appeal," said Charles R. Garry, Kozibioukian's lawyer. "I think those three people are the most beautiful people I've ever represented, and they're totally honest."

Jacobsen and Assistant U.S. Atty. Eric Dobberten countered that the three were leaders of an Armenian Secret Army cell in Los Angeles. The prosecution disclosed that several months before the attempted bombing, it was gathering information about the Kozibioukians through an authorized national security phone tap, a hidden microphone in their living room and FBI surveillance.

The Armenian Secret Army, a radical, leftist group that purportedly has received training from the Palestine Liberation Organization, has claimed responsibility for dozens of terrorist attacks worldwide since the mid-1970s.

In one monitored telephone call to Beirut, then the headquarters of Armenian Secret Army, Kozibioukian was heard talking about having a "wedding" at the office of a Glendale-based Armenian newspaper, *The Asbarez*. Jacobsen said that was a reference to a possible bombing.

The newspaper had reported that four people, arrested in Toronto on suspicion of extorting money from Armenian merchants, were suspected Armenian

Secret Army members.

The prosecution said the plan to bomb the newspaper office was scrapped. However, late on May 29, 1982, as federal agents listened, Kozibioukian spoke again by phone to Beirut about "the boys" in Toronto. At one point in the conversation, the voice in Beirut said, "Put it on the Canadians."

With that direction, the three left the Kozibioukians' apartment in the San Fernando Valley and headed for the airport, with FBI agents following.

The suspects circled the airport, stopped at the Air Canada freight building, about a mile from the passenger terminals, and placed an explosive-filled 32-ounce cottage cheese container on the doorstep of the Air Canada building.

Took Stand

Fifteen minutes before the bomb was timed to go off, it was defused.

Kozibioukian, a jeweler who testified on his own behalf, insisted that he and the others were forced to plant the bomb by Vicken Tcharkhutian, who had threatened to harm Kozibioukian's family if Kozibioukian failed to carry out the bombing.

"This is a lunatic," Kozibioukian said of Tcharkhutian. "He wants to hit things left and right."

Kozibioukian testified that he tried to tell Tcharkhutian that violence was "nonsense" and "didn't help our cause."

"In this country, you have the First Amendment . . . you don't need bombs," he said he tried to tell the man.

In an effort to foil Tcharkhutian, Kozibioukian said he fashioned the bomb so that it would not detonate. He placed the bomb at an hour when no one would be at the terminal to ensure that if it went off, there would be no injuries.

CIA Tie Denied

Garry and his co-counsels, Leonard I. Weinglass and Paul J. Geragos, tried to suggest that Tcharkhutian was a CIA agent who came to Los Angeles to foment violence in the Armenian community.

Although the government denied that the man worked for the CIA, the defense lawyers tried to raise a doubt in the jurors' minds by calling former CIA agent Ralph McGehee, who testified that the CIA routinely lies to cover up the identities of its agents.

FBI agents testified that they tried to determine the identity of the man, but by the time they discovered who he was, he was on a jet bound for Paris.

At the request of authorities here, French police arrested Tcharkhutian when he landed there, but the French refused to extradite him and subsequently let him go. A warrant remains in effect for his arrest in the Air Canada bombing plot.

A few months after he left the United States, Tcharkhutian was indicted on a separate charge that he conspired to extort \$150,000 from the owner of Carpeteria carpet stores, an Armenian, to fund Armenian Secret Army activities.

The Kozibioukians and Chirinian face 20 years in prison for their convictions of possessing an unregistered bomb and an attempt to blow up a building used in interstate commerce.